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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000066

SIPDIS

S/ES-O PASS TO THE SECRETARY'S PARTY IN NEW YORK; NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; DRL FOR HARRIS/JOHNSTONE; PRM FOR RAMGOOLIE/BROOKS-RUBIN; NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

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SUBJECT: IDF FIRE KILLS 40, INJURES 45 IN VICINITY OF UNRWA SHELTER IN JABALIYA

REF: JERUSALEM 47

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary. IDF mortar fire in the direction of UNRWA's "al-Fukhara" Jabaliya Prep C Girls school killed 40 and injured 45 on January 6, according to UNRWA. The school was being used as one of 25 emergency shelters for displaced persons in the northern Gaza Strip. An IDF press statement says the strike was in response to Hamas mortar fire. UNRWA has called for an independent investigation. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) UNRWA Gaza Director John Ging told RefCoord that three IDF mortar shells landed near "al-Fukhara" Prep C Girls school in Jabaliya refugee camp January 6. The school was being used as one of UNRWA's 25 emergency shelters in Gaza and hosted 350 displaced persons from the northern Gaza Strip. Ging said 10 people were killed instantly, 30 later died of their injuries, and 45 were wounded.

¶3. (U) The IDF has told the press that it was responding to Hamas mortar fire from the school compound. The IDF released archival video footage that purportedly shows rockets launched from the school prior to the start of IDF operations December 27. The IDF also announced that two Hamas militants, Imad and Hasan Abu Askar, were identified among the casualties at the site.

¶4. (C) Ging told RefCoord that UNRWA staff visited the school the morning of January 7 to investigate the incident and found no indications that militants were firing from the school compound. He noted that militants may have operated near the school. Ging underscored that UNRWA had sent and the IDF had received GPS coordinates for the 91 locations identified by UNRWA as possible emergency shelters. Ging has publicly called for an independent investigation of the IDF claims.

¶5. (C) After three people were killed by IDF fire at UNRWA's Asma Elementary School in Gaza City on January 5 (reftel), RefCoord pressed Ging for any information UNRWA might have about accusations that Hamas is launching attacks from UNRWA facilities. Ging responded that UNRWA is "very active on this issue, every UNRWA shelter is guarded 24/7 by experienced trusted staff who are fully briefed and committed to ensure no militants take refuge there."

WALLES